

## Homeless crime vs. arrestees from Park Ridge

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Incidents of criminal activity among some members of the Chicago area's homeless population have been cited by concerned parents in recent months as Park Ridge officials consider regulations for the operation of homeless shelters in the city.

Recently, a Chicago parent and police officer opposed to St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church's plans to host a Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) site presented the Park Ridge Police Department with data showing the number of individuals arrested in the city who gave one of six PADS headquarters as their home address.

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Jefferson Park (16th) District Commander Tony Riccio's statistics covered an eight-year period, from January 2000 to Oct. 1, 2008 and counted arrests made throughout the entire city of Chicago, said Park Ridge Acting Police Chief Tom Swoboda. Riccio found that individuals who gave a PADS address accounted for 513 arrests during that eight-year period.

According to Swoboda, the data showed a total of 132 arrests of individuals who had used Palatine's Journeys from PADS to HOPE -- the organization St. Paul is looking to partner with -- as their home address. That equates to 17 arrests per year on average, Swoboda said.

The types of charges filed in these cases needs further study, he added, as they can range anywhere from driving without a license to more serious crimes. Some individuals may have also been arrested more than once, he added.

According to Journeys from PADS to HOPE, during the 2007-08 winter season, over 500 clients were registered to stay at suburban PADS sites. If there is an average of 17 guests arrested in Chicago each year, that would equal 3.4 percent of Journeys' PADS population.

Swoboda said that, for comparison, he ran a check of the number of arrestees in Chicago who had given Park Ridge addresses over the last eight years. A total of 2,544 residents were arrested, he said. That is an average of 318 residents arrested each year, or just under one percent of Park Ridge's population.

During recent meetings before the Park Ridge City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission, parents have mentioned the July murder of Chicago Police Officer Richard Francis by a homeless woman; the sexual assault of a child in Glen Ellyn by a former client of DuPage PADS whom she and her family were living with; and an assault on a Chicago police officer by a homeless man with a knife as examples of the potential dangers the homeless can pose.